

**Andrew Jackson to James Brown, February 4, 1815,  
from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by  
John Spencer Bassett.**

1 Copy. James Brown was U. S. senator from Louisiana 1813–1817, 1819–1823; minister to France 1823–1829.

New Orleans, February 4, 1815.

*Sir*, I have just recd. your letter of the 5 ult. That of the 5th of Decr. was receivd in time, but the multiplicity of my engagements prevented.

I am happy to accompa[n]y the acknowledgement of both with the assurance that New Orleans is safe. You were right in your conjectures as to the designs of the enemy. New Orleans was his object, and he relied upon no trifling preparations for gaining possession of it. so confident indeed was he of triumph, that he came fully provided for the immediate establishment of civil government, nor must the confidence of his hopes be reckoned a proof of his madness.

Had he arrived a few days sooner, or had we failed to attack him in his first position it would have been improbable to have prevented the attainment of his object and then whether we should have been able to have dispossessed him of it, or when, is very uncertain. heaven however interposed on our behalf and enabled us to defeat his views.

I am not apprised of the causes which have occassioned this important section to be left in so defenseless a condition, to me it is perfectly astonishing.

Equally astonishing is the total ignorance I have found among all descriptions of persons of its topography. The numerous bayous and canals communicating with the lakes appear

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to be almost as little understood by the inhabitants as the Citizens of Tennessee. It is true every man will undertake to give you an exact description of the whole and every man gives you an erroneous one.

That by which the enemy approached us notwithstanding the great care I took to have it well guarded, was considered so impracticable as to be left wholly unobstructed and defenseless. Never, I am persuaded has this insolent enemy met with so severe a repulse as that which drove him from our shore. His loss from the time of his landing, till his retreat, has I am persuaded, by recent and convincing evidence exceeded five thousand, while ours in the same time has not exceeded in the whole three hundred.

It is true, as you have stated the whole Island is a defile and that Cannon and batteries are its proper defence. your other remark is equally true, that these should be well supplied and numerous.

Permit me to ask again what defense there was for the Lakes. the few boats were immediately captured and the large vessel building at Chefeunctee, which would have been the best defense and sufficient to have dispersed the flotilla of the enemy, after being nearly completed was placed in dry dock and left to rot. in that situation, what was the state of things here and taking them as we found them, we have reason to thank Heaven for our success. so far as depends upon my exertions, I presume I need not assure you, that this country shall as soon as possible be placed in the best possible state for defense and if my views are properly seconded, I think it will not be long before it may bid defiance to its enemies.

The enemy continue to be at Ship Island, engaged in building boats. whether their object be to renew their attempts here, or advance on Mobile by the Pass Heron, so as to be out of reach of the guns of the Fort, or return to some of the W. I. Islands, I do not pretend to determine. We have endeavored to be prepared for any emergency.

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The truth is, having made no provision for the event of a failure, I believe he is wholly at a loss how to act. The utmost unanimity has prevailed among all classes and description of persons here, the citizens have distinguished themselves by their kindness to the Tennessee troops.

Very Respectfully, Your obdt. Svt.